



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

04 March 2005

**SCG43300.E**

Serbia and Montenegro: Treatment of ethnic Albanians living in the Presevo Valley, Vojvodina and Sandjak region of Serbia by the state, and by society in general (January 2003-February 2005)  
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

A legal adviser from the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia stated that her organization had not noted any major human rights violations against ethnic Albanians in the Presevo Valley, where they form the majority of the population (28 Feb. 2005).

The legal adviser indicated that there are other ethnic minorities, but not many Albanians, living in Vojvodina (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia 28 Feb. 2005). In Sandzak, "Bosnians, not Albanians" are the main minority group (ibid.).

*Country Reports 2004* provides further information on the Hungarian minority constituted approximately 10% of the population. In the Sandjak region, the majority were held by ethnic Hungarians. In the Sandjak region, Tutin, and Sjenica, and Prijepolje". (28 Feb. 2005)

The March 2003 report to the Court of Human Rights stated that ethnic Albanians in Vojvodina as one of the minorities, along with Romanians, Ruthenians and Slovaks.

An article in *Le Courrier des Balkans* stated that there were close to 30 different minorities, but that the majority were Croats and Hungarians (25 Sept. 2004). The article also mentioned attacks against the government (EU 2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration  
and Refugee Board, Ottawa

on of the two regions: "In Vojvodina, Sandjak, and many regional political offices and municipal governments of Novi Pazar, Sandjak, and Sjenica, and Prijepolje".

ter for Human Rights did not include attacks on Croats, Hungarians, Roma, and Slovaks.

rd of non-violent cohabitation among its residents had occurred, mostly directed at the government. An ombudsman to deal with complaints

However, according to Amnesty International, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia reported 40 attacks on minorities following the December 2003 elections in Vojvodina (1 September 2004). Amnesty International (AI) stated that, on 22 March 2004, 24 people were arrested for attacking businesses owned by "Gorani and Albanians" in Vojvodina (AI 1 September 2004). These attacks occurred in response to violent attacks in Kosovo in mid-March 2004 against ethnic Serbs (ibid.).

However, another source reported that attacks on small shops owned by "[Goranci], an ethnic group similar to Albanians," occurred in March 2004 in response to the violence directed at Kosovo Serbs (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia 28 Feb. 2005). Information found on "Gorani/Goranci" indicates that they are "Slavic Muslims" (Peace Brigades International Feb. 2000).

In applying the 2002 Law on Local Government, the Serbian government has transferred some administrative competencies to the provincial authorities in Vojvodina, but it has not allowed regional self-government (EU 2004).

In a report entitled *Serbia and Montenegro: Stabilisation and Association Report 2004*, the Commission of the European Communities stated that, while the general political situation had improved between 2002 and 2004, "[t]he lack of confidence among the ethnic communities made difficult the establishment of the municipal authorities (in particular in Presevo and Bujanovac)" (ibid.).

The Commission also indicated that minority languages, including Albanian in southern Serbia, were becoming more respected (ibid.).

In south Serbia (Presevo Valley), one source reported that despite numerous attacks against police and army units in the summer of 2003, "the authorities showed restraint and managed to keep the situation under control".

control" (ibid.).

A young ethnic Albanian was shot and killed by a Serbian patrol as he was trying to illegally cross the border between Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia on 7 January 2005 (*Southeast European Times* 10 Jan. 2005). The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has indicated its concerns over "stability in South Serbia" since the killing had "triggered protests" and "[raised] concerns about a potential renewal of tensions" (ibid.). Political parties representing ethnic Albanians asked for the replacement of the Serbian army by international forces (BETA News Agency 13 Jan. 2005).

The Belgrade-based BETA News Agency reported that the government of Serbian prime minister Vojislav Kostunica "[had] forgot[ten] about the region," since among other things infrastructure projects had stopped, "angering local Albanian leaders and fuelling their demands for autonomy" (ibid.). Two political parties controlled by ethnic Albanians - The Democratic Party of Albanians and the Party for Democratic Action - hold every seat but one in the Presevo town assembly (ibid.). BETA News Agency also said that the Serbian government's presence in the area was limited to the army and police forces (ibid.).

For more information on the treatment of ethnic Albanians in Southern Serbia (Presevo) and Vojvodina, please consult *Country Reports 2004*, Sections 3 and 4.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

Amnesty International (AI). 1 September 2004. *Europe and Central Asia Summary of Amnesty International's Concerns in the Region (January - June 2004)*. (EUR 01/005/2004).  
<<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGEUR010052004?open&of=ENG-ROM>> [Accessed 17 Jan. 2005]

BETA News Agency [Belgrade]. 13 January 2005. "Belgrade Seen as 'Incapable' of Addressing Security Concerns in South Serbia." (FBIS-EEU-2005-0113 14 Jan. 2005/WNC)

\_\_\_\_\_. [In Serbian]. 10 January 2005. "Serbian Military Analysts: Army Not Expected To Leave South Serbia Anytime Soon." (FBIS-EEU-2005-0110 11 Jan. 2005/WNC)

*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004*. 28 February 2005. "Serbia and Montenegro." United States Department of State. Washington, DC. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41706.htm>> [Accessed 17 Feb. 2005]

*Le Courrier des Balkans* [Arcueil, France]. 25 September 2004. "La Voïvodine, nouveau foyer de tensions ?" <<http://www.balkans.eu.org/article4609.html>> [Accessed 1 Feb. 2005]

European Union (EU). 2004. Commission of the European Communities. *Commission Staff Working Paper, Serbia and Montenegro: Stabilisation and Association Report 2004*. [SEC(2004)376].  
<[http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/see/sap/rep3/cr\\_s-m.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/see/sap/rep3/cr_s-m.pdf)> [Accessed 26 Jan. 2005]

Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia. 28 February 2005. Correspondence from a legal adviser.

Peace Brigades International (PBI). February 2000. "Balkan Peace Team-Kosovo/a

Monthly Report No. 12." <<http://www.peacebrigades.org/bpt/bpt0002.html>> [Accessed 4 March 2005]

*Southeast European Times*. 10 January 2005. "OSCE Appeals for Calm in Southern Serbia Following Teen's Shooting." <[http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/setimes/features/2005/01/10/feature-01?print=yes](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features/2005/01/10/feature-01?print=yes)> [Accessed 3 March 2005]

Voivodina Center for Human Rights. March 2003. *Report Submitted Pursuant to Article 25 Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*.  
<[http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/bhr/english/articles/fcnm\\_alt\\_rep.doc](http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/bhr/english/articles/fcnm_alt_rep.doc)> [Accessed 17 Feb. 2005]

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources** : The International Crisis Group-Belgrade did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response .

**Internet sources, including:** Amnesty International (AI), The Balkan Human Rights Web Page, Comité de liaison pour la solidarité avec l'Europe de l'Est Conseil de l'Europe (COLISEE), *Le Courrier des Balkans*, Freedom House, Humanitarian Law Center, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), World News Connection.